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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES GOR ON INTERNEWS

REF: A. STATE 53353

[1](#)B. MOSCOW 1880

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador emphasized strong USG concerns about Internews/the Educated Media Foundation (EMF) with several senior GOR officials, urging a quick resolution of the case. In separate conversations with First DFM Denisov, DFM Yakovenko, DFM Kislyak, and Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Prihodko, the Ambassador said that the recent police raid on the NGO and seizure of Internews/EMF equipment was a serious overreaction by Russian authorities to a customs violation ordinarily settled by a fine.

[1](#)2. (C) He emphasized that Internews/EMF's inability to operate as a result of the raid had created significant concerns in Washington over the GOR's motives, but that the USG had sought so far to handle the matter through quiet diplomacy. Moreover, the European Union provided substantial funding to the NGO, and action against Internews would be broader than a U.S.-Russia bilateral issue. The Ambassador also reminded the deputy foreign ministers that FM Lavrov had previously expressed his readiness to pursue specific U.S. concerns about treatment of NGOs. This was such a case.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador also discussed Internews/EMF with Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Kosachev, who likewise had invited the Ambassador to raise any concerns about NGOs in Russia. The Ambassador stressed that Internews/EFM was working to resolve the matter and its staff had acknowledged their mistake. He asked Kosachev to help resolve the situation quickly and allow Internews/EFM to return to work. Kosachev and other interlocutors promised to inquire and respond as soon as possible.

[1](#)4. (C) Internews/EMF Director Manana Aslamazian told us April 24 that the NGO's board had not made a final decision on how it would respond to the raid, other than to temporarily suspend operations. Aslamazian said Internews would file a court case against authorities, contending that the raid had been illegal. She had heard rumors, however, that Sheremetev Airport police may turn the case over to the Economic Crimes Unit at the MVD for further investigation and possibly more serious charges. Aslamazian is scheduled to travel to Washington in early May to receive an award in conjunction with Internews' 25th anniversary but may not travel because of the investigation.
BURNS